

California Public Schools



A Parent's Guide

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****All references to parents within this guide also apply to legal guardians.***



California Public Schools

A Guide for Parents

This brochure outlines important information about California's public schools and the rights of parents whose children attend them.

The topics covered in this brochure may vary slightly in your school district as many districts have additional policies and requirements. To find out more, contact your district. Your district can be found on the California Department of Education (CDE) website at **www.cde.ca.gov**.

Enrolling your Child

Enrolling your child in school is the first step. By the time your child is four years old, you should be in contact with your school district to learn about enrollment requirements. Ask about any pre-kindergarten programs, as some districts offer them during the summer.

You will be required to provide a birth certificate, up-to-date immunization records, and proof of your home address. If you do not live within the school boundaries, you may be able to enroll your child through Open Enrollment. Visit the CDE District Transfers web page at **www.cde.ca.gov/re/di/fq/districttransfers.asp**.

District Transfers

Policies regarding transfers within a district or between districts are the responsibility of the district governing board. If an inter-district transfer is denied, the child's parents or guardians may file an appeal with the county office of education, which is the final judge of the issue. Check with your district to learn what local policy is in place.

Immunization and Health Checkup

At the time of enrollment, your child must be up-to-date on all required immunizations. Check with your district to find out what they are. There are also requirements for students entering the 7th grade. Students entering the 7th grade must show proof of three hepatitis B immunizations and a second measles (or MMR) shot. More information is available on the CDE Health Services & School Nursing web page at **www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/hn/**.

Immigration

All children who enroll in public schools must be accepted and cannot be put on a waiting list. It is against the law to deny any child enrollment into a public school based on immigration status. If you have questions, contact your school district or the U.S. Department of Education at **www.ed.gov**.



ESL

Children who are learning to speak English are provided extra resources to ensure they acquire full proficiency in English as rapidly as possible and within a reasonable period of time, in order to achieve the same grade-level academic standards expected of all students. To accomplish these goals, English learners are provided language development instruction targeted to their English proficiency level. If your child is an English learner, check with your district about which language development program is the best approach. You can find more information on the CDE English Learners web page at **www.cde.ca.gov/sp/el/**.

Special Needs

California public schools include an array of services designed to help students with disabilities meet or exceed high standards of achievement in academic and nonacademic skills. The district will coordinate a meeting with the parent(s) of a special needs child to create an IEP (individualized education program) that best serves the educational needs of that child, and will ensure such services are provided at no cost to the parent(s).

Additionally, California offers a variety of direct services through programs operated at the two Schools for the Deaf, the School for the Blind, and three diagnostic centers in Northern, Central and Southern California.

If you have a special needs student, the district can assist you in providing the proper planning to meet your child's educational needs. You can find more information and resources on the CDE Special Education web page at **www.cde.ca.gov/sp/se/**.

Attendance

Missing class time impacts a student's academic performance. Student attendance affects both student learning and the school budget. At-risk students who are chronically tardy or absent are at risk for academic failure. However, you have the right to keep your child home when ill, or for whatever reason you feel is necessary. Check with your district for specific policies. The district cannot reduce your child's grades due to an excused absence if the work that was missed is made up.



Supplemental Instruction Programs

Supplemental instruction is available to help your child keep up and meet grade-level standards. Supplemental instruction programs may be offered before or after the regular school day, on Saturdays, during intercessions, or during summer sessions.

Districts are required to provide supplemental instruction in grades two through nine when a student is recommended for supplemental instruction or is being retained. Furthermore, districts are required to provide supplemental instruction in grades seven through twelve when a student does not demonstrate progress toward passing the California High School Exit Exam. Ask your district about the availability of supplemental instruction programs.

After-school Programs

Many districts include programs before and after school that help provide support for academic achievement, literacy, and educational enrichment while providing safe and constructive environments for students during non-school hours. If you need care before or after school, the district can help you find available programs.

Food Programs

There are a number of state and federally-funded food programs which provide breakfast, lunch, and snacks. These programs are available to all children. Check with your school to find out what's available.

Testing and Assessment

The Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) Program helps determine your child's performance on grade-level standards. The STAR Program consists of tests that are aligned to California's

content standards and are required for state and federal accountability. All students in grades two through eleven, including English learners and students in special education programs, are required to participate in testing. The district will provide you with an individual written report of your child's performance. More information is available on the CDE Standardized Testing and Reporting (STAR) web page at **www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/sr/**.

Promotion and Retention

The law requires that all students meet certain grade-level standards before being promoted to the next grade. Students can be retained (held back) if they have not achieved grade-level proficiency. The school must identify children at risk of retention as early in the school year as possible. Parents and guardians are notified so that they can work with the teacher to identify interventions such as tutoring, before or after-school programs or summer school, to help the student succeed. Contact your district to learn about their retention and promotion policies. For more information, visit the CDE Pupil Promotion & Retention web page at **www.cde.ca.gov/re/lr/pr/**.

Policy Development

Parents and guardians have the right and should be given the opportunity to work in a mutually supportive and respectful partnership with the school to help their children succeed. Each school district has a policy that outlines how parents and guardians, school staff, and students share the responsibility for the intellectual, physical, emotional, social development, and well-being of their students. This policy shall include, but is not limited to:



1. How parents/guardians and the school will help students to achieve academic and other standards.
2. How the school will provide high-quality curriculum and instruction to all students in a supportive learning environment.
3. What parents/guardians can do to support their child's learning environment, including but not limited to:
 - monitor school attendance
 - monitor homework completion
 - encourage extracurricular activities
 - monitor television viewing
 - plan and participate in activities at home
 - be supportive of classroom activities
 - volunteer at school
 - participate in decision-making at school
 - talk to the teacher often



California High School Exit Exam

The California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) consists of two parts: English-language arts and mathematics. All students in California public schools must satisfy the CAHSEE requirement, as well as other state and local graduation requirements, in order to receive a high school diploma. Students' first opportunity to take the CAHSEE is in the second half of grade ten. Students who do not pass one or both parts of the CAHSEE in grade ten will have the opportunity to take it again. For specific information, visit the CDE California High School Exit Examination (CAHSEE) web page at www.cde.ca.gov/ta/tg/hs/.

Beyond High School

Students and parents have the right to be informed of college entrance requirements. It is important to know how to assist students who choose to pursue a higher education.

Students, and parents, need to know which college preparatory classes to take in high school. Minimum requirements vary, depending on the college or university. The current requirements noted below are submitted by the Regents of the University of California and are generally the most rigorous:

- A** - Two years of history-social science, which are to include U.S. government, world history, culture, and geography.
- B** - An English class every semester of every year for four years.
- C** - A mathematics class every semester of every year for three years, including algebra and geometry; four years recommended.
- D** - Two years of laboratory science beyond ninth grade; an additional year recommended.
- E** - Two years of the same language other than English; three years recommended.
- F** - One year of visual and performing arts.
- G** - One year of college preparatory electives in addition to those required in sections a-f above.

To gain admission to any of the campuses of the University of California or the California State University, students must also take and submit scores from either the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or the American College Test (ACT). Your child's high school counseling office can provide the testing dates and locations.

College and Financial Aid

It is never too early to start thinking about your child's college plans. If your child is entering high school, it is time to start checking admission requirements for college. Schools will help students plan their high school years to ensure eligibility for college and assist them through the application process. Additionally, resources for students and parents on choosing, applying, and paying for college are available on the California Colleges website at **www.californiacolleges.edu**.



Parents Rights

Parents and guardians of enrolled students have the right to be included in the educational process and to have access to the system on behalf of their children. Included are the rights to:

- Receive proper notification, in English and in their home language, of their rights and opportunities.
- Visit their child's classroom to observe activities. The time and date of the visitation must be arranged in advance with the school.
- Request a conference with their child's teacher(s) or principal. The school should be contacted to schedule a date and time convenient to all participants.
- Volunteer time and resources for the improvement of school facilities and programs. The school should be contacted to determine the terms and conditions of this service.
- Be notified in a timely manner if their child is absent from school without permission.

- Be notified of their child's performance on standardized and state-wide tests and the school's ranking on these tests. (Under other state law, parents and guardians may request that their child not participate in the state-wide tests.)
- Request that their child be enrolled in any school in the district. The district is not compelled to grant the request.
- Be assured of a safe and supportive learning environment for their child.
- Examine the curriculum materials of the class or classes in which their child is enrolled.
- Be informed of their child's academic progress in school and of the persons to contact if they wish more information or assistance for their child.
- Access their child's records and to question anything they feel is inaccurate or misleading or an invasion of privacy. They also have the right to a timely response from the school district about their questions.
- Be notified, as early in the school year as practicable, if their child is identified as being at risk of retention.
- Receive information regarding the academic standards their child is expected to meet.
- Receive written notification of school rules, attendance policies, dress codes, disciplinary procedures, retention and promotion policies, and procedures for school visitations.
- Receive information on all psychological testing recommended for their child.

- Participate as a member of a parent advisory committee, school-site council, or site-based management leadership team in accordance with established rules and regulations for membership.
- Attend at least two meetings per year scheduled by the school to get information on school issues and activities.



Resources

U.S. Department of Education

www.ed.gov

400 Maryland Avenue, SW

Washington, DC 20202-0498

800.USA.LEARN or 800.872.5327

California Department of Education

www.cde.ca.gov

1430 N Street

Sacramento, CA 95814

916.319.0800

California Department of Health Services

Office of Vital Records

www.dhs.ca.gov/chs/ovr

for copies of birth records for enrollment,
select “services”

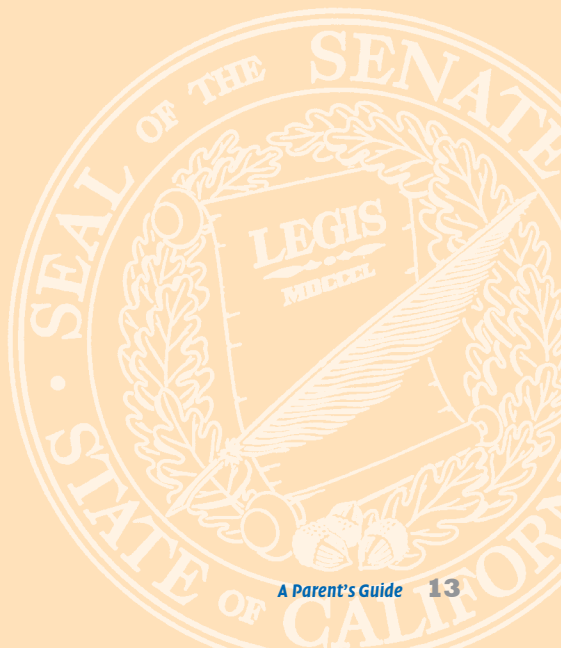
MS5103, P.O. Box 997410

Sacramento, CA 95899-7410

916.445.2684

California Colleges

www.californiacolleges.edu





Senator Marty Block

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www.senate.ca.gov/block